

8. Irrigation. The expenditure on minor irrigation works has risen from Rs. 31,412 in 1996 to Rs. 94,691 in 1999, the allotment for the current year being Rs. 1,19,990. The restoration of eight tanks in the Neyyattinkara taluk and five in the Vilavankod taluk was all but completed by the close of 1999, and good progress was made in the improvement of some more tanks in Vilavankod and Kalkulam. The report of the Irrigation Committee appointed in 1998 for examining the condition of the minor irrigation works in the Trivandrum taluk and for formulating proposals in respect of its improvement has just been received by the Government and is now under their scrutiny.

9. Land Records Maintenance. In my first Assembly address, I indicated the main essentials of land records maintenance and the extent to which failure to observe those essentials had contributed to the disorganisation of land records and to the indiscriminate occupation of lands at the disposal of the Government as well as those reserved for communal purposes. The refixing of theodolite stations, a necessary preliminary to land records maintenance, was started and Assistant Tahsildars were employed, *inter alia*, to survey *porambokes* and list encroachments thereon. Up to the close of 1999, the refixing of theodolite stations prior to the commencement of regular maintenance work was completed in 367 out of the 400 *pakuthies* in which that work had to be done, and out of a total of 2,42,607 *poramboke* survey numbers covering an area of 3,23,083 acres, the demarcation, survey and preparation of plotted measurement sketches were completed in respect of 92,727 survey numbers covering an area of 97,202 acres. Nearly 40 per cent. of the field work connected with the survey of *porambokes* is thus over, while the balance remaining to be done is about 60 per cent. 62,898 encroachments, covering an area of 5,472 acres, have been detected by the land records staff in the course of their survey of *porambokes*, of which 49,334 cases have been disposed of by the Tahsildars either by registry or by eviction, according as the occupation was unobjectionable or objectionable. While thus a substantial amount of work has been done in this direction, there is no disguising the fact that there is still a very large quantity of work remaining to be done, for bringing to completion the work of surveying *porambokes* and settling the mutual claims of the Sirkar and the land-holder in the matter of their occupation. Such a settlement, it is needless to point out, is imperative in the interests alike of the land-holders and the wider public; and it is idle to expect the Tahsildar with his multifarious and ever-increasing duties to be able to devote that special attention which the clearing of these arrears within a reasonable time involves. Even after the completion of this particular item of work, it will be found that there are many other important items of land records work, such as the writing up of land registers, the maintenance of survey marks on Government lands as well as private holdings, the sub-division of lands for *puduvai* and transfer purposes and the preparation of correct plotted sketches, which the Tahsildar cannot be expected to have the time to properly attend to, and which will engage the full time of a body of superior executive assistants like the Assistant Tahsildars, if the revenue work of the taluks is to be kept abreast of advancing times. It is therefore difficult to foresee the day when the Assistant Tahsildars will become a superfluity, although it might be possible to dispense with the bulk of the staff of the temporary accountants and peons now given to them. The work of these officers has shown perceptible improvement in recent years and it cannot now be said that their outturn is below the mark. They have further been steadily contributing revenue which far exceeds the cost of the upkeep of themselves and their staff, and which, though due legitimately to the Government, was not coming in, in past years. We no doubt hear complaints now and then of the hardship caused in individual cases. Such complaints were largely due in the past to the nature of the rules that had been passed under the Land Conservancy Regulation, IV of 1991. The main defects in these rules were, however, removed in 1998 and their rigour relaxed; and the result has been a considerable amount of relief to the public. This will be clear from the fact that, although the number of cases disposed of under the Land Conservancy Regulation increased from 7,240 in 1997 to 22,333 in 1999, the amount of assessment realised, both ordinary and prohibitory, rose from Rs. 18,355 to Rs. 21,479 only. In other words, while the amount